

Gabb.]

508

[Aug. 22,

793 Cabecar he visited us twice, and on neither occasion did he speak, except when spoken to, unless it was to make some remark, in very few words, and in a low tone of voice, to some of his attendants. His dress consisted of a white shirt, not over clean, a woven cotton breech-cloth, a bright-red handkerchief, tied in a roll around his head, and a magnificent necklace of four strands of large tiger's teeth. He sold me two of the strings for half-a-dollar, and I presented him with some trifles, among which was the rather suggestive article, a bar of soap. He accepted them without any acknowledgment. But then they don't know how to say, "thank you."

[124] Next in importance are the *Tsu'-gurs*. These are the ordinary priests, and their duties are confined to officiating at the feast for the dead. Like the preceding, they are hereditary; only members of one or two families can become priests, and these seem to have all descended from a common ancestor. I have already described the performances of the *Tsu'-gur* at the death-feast of Santiago, and there is nothing to add in that connection. Other feasts only differ in the less degree of profusion and the shorter time they occupy. But there is one circumstance of which I have said little, and that has always seemed to me mysterious. Unfortunately, from no want of effort on my part, I was not successful in investigating this more thoroughly. The songs of these priests are in a language, dialect, or jargon, whichever it may be called, in great part unintelligible to the uninitiated. Some words used are in the vernacular, but many of the nouns are peculiar. *Si-bu*, or God, has at least twenty names; many natural objects have names peculiar to the priests, and the difference is so great that not only I, with my imperfect knowledge of the language, but Mr. Lyon, who speaks it as well as an Indian, could not understand even the purport of the songs. These songs are taught by rote to the young candidates to the priesthood, and are always rehearsed by the priests apart, before being sung. I made several efforts to obtain a vocabulary, but in each case was defeated, rather by the want of understanding on the part of the priest, than from any unwillingness to impart what they knew. At last I made an agreement with the most intelligent and best informed of them. He was to visit me at a certain time and answer all my questions—for a consideration. But a severe attack of rheumatism prevented his coming and lost me the last chance. I have no theory to offer as to the origin of this singular fact. But two explanations however, seem possible. Either the whole thing is an invention, which I think hardly probable, or the system is an exotic, and the songs are in the original language of the missionary who introduced it. I can hardly express my regret at failing to obtain some clue to so interesting a problem.

756
791 Finally come the *Awas*, sorcerers, or doctors. This is an open profession, and since it requires but little preparation, gives certain privileges and standing, and brings occasional emoluments, it is pretty numerously filled. The fellows are an arrant set of quacks, and I do not believe there is a single one who acts in good faith. Nevertheless, the people as a rule

believe in them. Some of the more intelligent or more civilized of the Indians, those who have been most in contact with foreigners, take foreign medicines when sick, but they are the exceptions. Their method of purifying an unclean person has already been described under the heads of child-birth and uncleanness. They also claim to bring or drive away rain. To do this, the doctor must have a pipe full of tobacco, or a cigar. He goes into the open air, smokes, blows the smoke in certain directions, calling out in an imperative tone of voice, "Rain, go to—" whatever place he may see fit to designate. Once when prisoners between two swollen rivers, forced to wait for them to fall low enough for us to ford; one of our few means of amusement was to give one of these fellows, in our suite, a pipe full of tobacco, and set him to clearing up the weather. He would go outside of our little hut, and between the puffs of smoke would call out, "Rain, go to Panama," "go to Chiriqui," "go to Cartago," in short, to every remote place of which he happened to know the name. It took him ten days before his efforts were crowned with success, and when ultimately the blue patches did begin to appear in the sky, he had the effrontery to calmly claim it as his doing! They also claim to "blow" a proposed route of travel, so as to drive away snakes and bring good luck on the route. In this case, the *modus operandi* is practically the same as for the weather. But their master efforts are when charming away sickness. To see the process, two of my companions feigned sickness and called in the services of one the doctors. He caused each one to procure a live chicken. Catching the animal by the neck and heels he made passes all over the body of the patient, in every direction. Any small animal will answer. Sloths, opossums, even young alligators are used, and are said to be equally efficacious.

After some minutes of this manipulation, he lighted a pipe and blew tobacco-smoke at them. Having given them numerous injunctions about diet, such as forbidding the use of coffee, tobacco, pepper, and salt for a day or two, he went outside the house, and spent half the night seated under an orange tree, singing a doleful ditty, enlivened at irregular periods by unearthly howls and groans. His fee for all this was, in addition to the two fowls, used in the ceremony, and which was all he would have received from an Indian, sixty cents from one and forty from the other; the fees being graduated by the gravity of the supposed infirmities. These doctors claim that their powers are based on the magical merits of certain charms they carry about with them. These charms are supposed to be calculi, extracted from the viscera of animals. Our friend, who tried to change the weather, possessed three of these. One purported to be from the liver of a sloth, another from the bladder of some other animal, &c. I examined them with a glass, and am convinced that they were mere fragments of little calcareous veins, common in the metamorphic rocks of the country, and which had been ground smooth by friction. My little knowledge of medicine, and a moderately well-supplied medicine-case, enabled me to make numerous cures, and of course I soon

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

HABITATIONS	47
Gabb⁸ speaks of three classes of shamans—the <i>usékara</i>, or “high priest”; the <i>tságur</i> (<i>tsuku</i>), who has charge of the ceremonies for the dead; and the <i>awa</i>, doctor or sorcerer, who cures diseases and controls the rain. He says that these latter treat diseases by making passes over the body of the patient with a sloth, opossum, alligator, or even a chicken. Their powers are based on the magic potency of calculi declared to be extracted from the viscera of animals. They bleed their patients with small lancets and give a counter irritant by beating the affected part with nettle leaves. Polygyny was practised in Gabb's time. The husband, he says, went to live with his father-in-law, or, if not, he bought his release with presents of live-stock in lieu of his services.	756 [791]● [767] 595 591
MATERIAL CULTURE <i>Habitations.</i>—Several native types of dwellings still survive among the Bribri. The more usual variety is sideless, rectangular or oval in ground-plan, with a convex or	342
AND MONOGRAPHS	3